

**Testimony  
Dennis Waz  
Public Utilities Director, City of Meriden  
Before the  
Environment Committee  
February 27, 2015**

- **HB-5888, AN ACT INCREASING REIMBURSEMENT FOR MUNICIPAL PHOSPHOROUS ABATEMENT**
- **SB-577, AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF CERTAIN PHOSPHOROUS REDUCTION GRANT CRITERIA FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding HB-5888 and SB-577, which are intended to address issues relating to reimbursement for municipal phosphorus reduction projects. Although I appreciate the intent of the bills, as drafted, the bills fail to address the concerns with the current funding mechanism.

We therefore urge you to support **HB-5291, AN ACT CONCERNING REIMBURSEMENT FOR MUNICIPAL PHOSPHOROUS ABATEMENT PROJECTS**, which reflects the changes that are needed to address inequities in the current funding mechanism to assist municipalities in moving forward with phosphorus reduction projects to meet the state's environmental goals.

The City of Meriden will have to invest an additional \$19 million to upgrade its Water Pollution Control Facility and add approximately \$600,000 to our annual operating budget in order to meet the phosphorus reduction requirements of the NPDES permit issued by the state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP). This places a considerable burden on residents and businesses during very challenging economic times. Moreover, our residents and businesses are shouldering the burden for meeting statewide environmental goals, which should be borne more equitably.

Recognizing this, the state legislature adopted Public Act 14-13, which directs the Clean Water Fund to reimburse municipalities for 50% of the projects associated with phosphorus reduction. Under the act, a project is only eligible for the 50% reimbursement if construction begins by July of 2018. However, Meriden is currently in the process of upgrading its Broad Brook water plant as well as moving forward with projects to upgrade the Elmore and Merimere water treatment plants and install additional or replacement storage tanks. These upgrades are required to comply with state and federal water quality requirements and ensure that we meet our obligation to provide residents and businesses with a safe, adequate supply of public water.

These projects require significant capital outlay as well as staff time to manage and oversee, making it difficult for the city to move forward with a phosphorus reduction project within the 2018 timeframe. Moreover, the City of Meriden upgraded its wastewater treatment plant in 2008 and was advised by DEEP at that time to upgrade to the 0.7 mg/l phosphorus limit, which we did.

Unfortunately, after the upgrade was completed, Meriden staff, as well as representatives from other plants on the Quinnipiac and Naugatuck Rivers, were invited to the DEEP office and advised that the EPA did not accept the state's program for phosphorus removal and DEEP therefore developed a new "interim" strategy for phosphorus removal which lowered Meriden's limit from 0.7 to 0.1 mg/l.

In addition to removing the restrictions on the reimbursement level, HB-5291 also includes important provisions to build on the work of the Coordinating Council charged with developing a statewide phosphorus reduction plan. As a co-chair of one of the Municipal Options Work Group, I am very pleased with the progress of the Coordinating Council in addressing these issues and support provisions in HB-5291 to ensure that DEEP (1) implements the recommendations that are being developed by the Coordinating Council; and (2) undertakes a study of the health of the Quinnipiac River so that we can examine the benefits that accrue from the investments in phosphorus control that have already been made.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.